

July 31, 2009

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, U.S. Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) voted against the America's Affordable Health Choices Act (H.R. 3200) in the Energy and Commerce Committee. In a statement released following the vote, Congressman Melancon repeated his support for healthcare reform that will bring more choice, access, and cost-savings to health care in Louisiana.

"After weeks of listening to my constituents in south Louisiana and working with my colleagues on the Energy and Commerce Committee to try to make this a bill I could support, I have decided to vote against this legislation in committee," Congressman Melancon said.

"I support health care reform that will lower costs for Louisiana families and businesses, increase the quality of care provided, and improve access to coverage and care for every American. However, I am still concerned about how the bill, in its current form, will affect individuals and small businesses in south Louisiana. Patient choice comes from competition in the marketplace, and I am concerned that the public option, as designed, would unfairly undercut anything the private sector could offer."

"As someone who is personally pro-life and represents a deeply pro-life constituency, I am also concerned that this bill does not do enough to ensure taxpayer dollars do not fund abortion. I am also concerned about the creation of an unelected health czar. I believe the government that is closest to the people governs best, and I am hesitant to give more powers to the federal government."

"In addition, this bill does not do enough to address the urgent need for more providers in rural communities. My hometown of Napoleonville only has one doctor still practicing, and when he retires, I don't know that we will find anyone to take his place. For rural America to survive and stay healthy, we must reverse this trend through incentives for health care providers to serve these communities."

"As a fiscally conservative Blue Dog, I am also concerned about the tax increases included in this bill. I believe any new spending should be paid for with cuts in other areas of the budget, and taxes should be raised only as a last resort."

"While I don't support the tax increases in this bill, I do believe that we must be fiscally responsible and find a way to pay for any new spending. We can't repeat the mistake that was made before I was in Congress with the Medicare prescription drug plan, where lawmakers avoided making the hard decisions to pay for it and instead just added hundreds of billions of dollars to the national debt for our children and grandchildren to pay. For their sake, we must pass health care reform that doesn't add to the deficit, and we must create more efficiencies and savings within the current system."

Congressman Melancon noted that there were many provisions in the bill he supported, **"I am pleased this legislation would cap out-of-pocket expenses, so a major illness doesn't send you and your family into bankruptcy. If enacted, it would soon ban insurance companies from using pre-existing conditions to deny you coverage. It would eliminate the coverage gap in the Medicare prescription drug plan, so seniors have the peace of mind that they will be able to afford the medicine they need to stay healthy. And it would provide assistance to small businesses to help them offer health care to their employees."**

In conclusion, Congressman Melancon repeated his commitment to continue working to shape the bill to make the final version better for Louisiana.

"We have a great opportunity to enact meaningful health care reform, and we must work to make sure it is done right. We need reform that lasts not just for the next five or ten years, but for generations to come.

"We are still in the beginning of what will be a lengthy discussion on how best to reform health care in our country. I will continue listening to my constituents and working with my colleagues in Congress to advance health care reform that will bring more choice, access, stability and cost-savings to the people of south Louisiana."

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